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National Consumers' League

Minimum wage laws are good business

New York

1921

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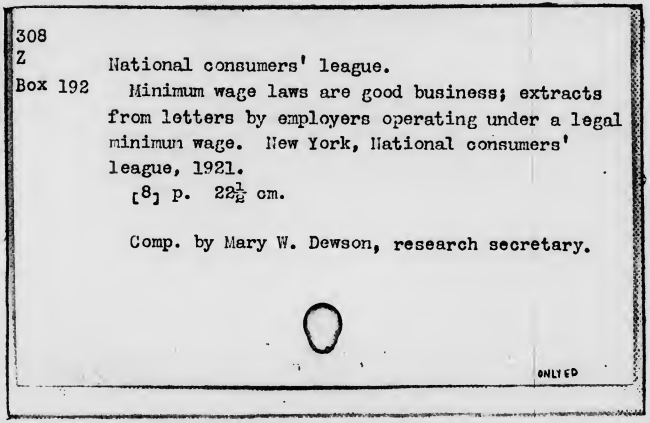
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# MINIMUM WAGE LAWS

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*Extracts from Letters by Employers Operating under a Legal Minimum Wage*

NATIONAL CONSUMERS' LEAGUE
44 EAST 23rd STREET
NEW YORK CITY

FEBRUARY, 1921

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## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS BY EMPLOYERS OPERATING UNDER A LEGAL MINIMUM WAGE

### Efficiency of the Workers Increased

*H. D. Ormsby, S. S. Kresge Company, Store No. 54, (five and ten cent store) Washington, D. C.* October 6, 1920.

"I believe in the minimum wage in the District. We are getting a higher standard of efficiency as a whole, however, with the minimum wage has come the necessity of educational work on salesmanship. I believe the minimum wage has brought employers and employees closer together and has taught the employer to build for a higher standard of service and has also taught employees that greater efficiency must come with higher salaries. I believe as a whole the minimum wage is a step toward higher better morals which is so greatly needed today in all walks of life."

*James McCormack, Pres., McCormack Bros., (retail dry goods) Tacoma, Wash.* Dec. 30, 1919.

"I am a strong advocate of a state law fixing a minimum wage for women. From personal knowledge, I am convinced that it has been a benefit to the women wage earners of the state of Washington, as well as to the employer. I am opposed to a wage that eliminates initiative and individual effort. I am strongly in favor of a wage sufficient to cover the necessaries of life, and let the worker compete for the wage that furnishes the luxuries. I find by that method we get greater efficiency."

*Thomas Roberts, Roberts Bros., (dry goods, shoes and men's furnishings) Portland, Ore.* Jan. 6, 1920.

"It has attracted a higher grade of help to the stores, and also while the wages are more, the efficiency is also more."

*Elizabeth C. Quinlan, The Young-Quinlan Co., (high grade attire for gentlewomen) Minneapolis, Minn.* Feb. 13, 1920.

"They" (minimum wage regulations) "have increased the efficiency of employees and have resulted in girls who hitherto worked for a small wage, at work for which they were not fitted, finding suitable employment where they could earn a minimum wage. Anything which drives home the fact that a business is most prosperous when all its employees are prosperous and free from worry cannot help but be a great influence for good in the community."

*William H. Austin, Austin-Hockaday Dry Goods Company, Concordia, Kansas.* Feb. 18, 1920.

"We are pleased with the rules of the Welfare Commission in regard to the minimum wage. At first we felt that the radical changes would work a hardship but we find that we do not want anyone who cannot earn the minimum wage."

### Labor Conditions Stabilized

*David J. Goldberg, Executive Director, Boston Dress and Waist Manufacturers' Ass'n, Boston, Mass.* May 15, 1920.

"It is my belief that a minimum wage properly arrived at and duly enforced works to the benefit not only of the employe but of the employer and the State as well. A proper minimum standard insures to a self-supporting woman at least such a wage as shall enable her to maintain herself in respectability and good health. It places on industry the just obligation of supporting its own workers and affords to the liberal and broad-minded employer protection against unjust competition on the part of those who would underpay their labor regardless of any standards."

"An adequate minimum wage makes for a more contented labor body, for there is nothing more conducive to unrest or agitation than an inability to earn a decent living without sacrifice of principle, character or health. The State by providing such minimum wage fulfills one of the functions of government which is to give to its people every means and opportunity for right living and growth."

*Luther C. White, Employment Manager, Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Boston, Mass.* Feb. 1, 1920.

"In short, I believe that a reasonable minimum makes for stability in labor conditions—the main thing we need today."

*E. L. Thompson, Treas., Portland Woolen Mills, Portland, Ore.* Dec. 3, 1919.

"The fact is it has had a settling effect in business."

*A. N. McDole, McCusick-Towle & Co., Manufacturing Confectioners, Minneapolis, Minn.* Feb. 6, 1920.

"Better wages have had a tendency to cut down labor turnover and that statement alone, would justify this sort of legislation to a very large extent."

*R. I. Bentley, General Manager, California Packing Co.,* Feb. 4, 1919.

"Handling a perishable product we, naturally, are anxious to

have things settled—and settled for the entire season—so that we know where we are at, and would welcome some method of adjustment that would bind the men as well as the women."

### Cost of Operation Not Increased

*Edward A. Filene, President, Wm. Filene's Sons Co., (retail specialty store) Boston, Mass.* Oct. 5, 1920.

"We have had the minimum wage in our concern since March 1, 1912, and the important thing about it is that, relatively the cost of wages as compared with other costs of running the business has not increased, but on the contrary has decreased."

*C. C. Carpenter, Pres., The MacDougall & Southwick Co., (retail dry goods) Seattle, Wash.* Dec. 31, 1919.

"Quite contrary to the belief of many merchants, a fair minimum wage will not increase the per cent. cost of operation."

### Employers Who Pay a Living Wage Protected from Unfair Competition

*Preston McKinney, Secretary, Canners' League of California, San Francisco, Cal.* March 11, 1920.

"The Act has been in effect since 1916, and it gives complete authority to The Industrial Welfare Commission to establish minimum rates of pay for women and minors, as well as giving the Commission very complete authority covering sanitary conditions as affecting the workers in the plants, seating arrangements, safety devices, etc.

"As administered by Mrs. Edson and the other members of the Commission, we are convinced that the industry itself has benefited. In any large industry, the majority of the units are managed by broad-minded men who see the human as well as the business side of their work, but it is equally true that in any large industry, a certain percentage of the units are administered by men who lack these elements. The effect of the work of the Industrial Welfare Commission has been to bring up the 'low end' and in so doing, has served to place competition on a better basis.

"Above is the effect on the industry as an industry. We have in addition the satisfaction which accrues to us because of the knowledge that our operatives are unusually well paid and work under particularly favorable conditions."

*W. T. Gamage, Supt. Canning Dept., Gorton-Pew Fisheries Co., Gloucester, Mass.* Feb. 4, 1920.

"The raise in wages is of advantage to the more liberal-minded employer since it usually forces competitors who have paid lower wages to advance their pay, thereby eliminating an unfair advantage possessed by the latter. In our experience we found that no employers objected to the recommendations of our Board. All employers seemed willing to submit to a fair advance in wages, provided all in the industry were placed on the same basis."

*D. D. Dayton, The Dayton Company, Minneapolis, Minn.* Feb. 5, 1920.

"There isn't any question that a minimum wage helps all legitimate business as against the employer who has not developed to the point where he realizes that good wages are a good investment."

*E. L. Thompson, Treas., Portland Woolen Mills, Portland, Oregon.* Dec. 3, 1919.

"It has removed the opportunity of the wage cutter and inefficient manager, the opportunity of under-selling and taking undue advantage of his more just and righteous competitor."

*B. C. Beck, Store Manager, The Bon Marché, Seattle, Wash.* Dec. 24, 1919.

"Establishment by the State of costs of living in various trades and localities is surely desirable. Fixation of minimums related to these living costs, below which wages paid shall not fall, only assists the constructive employer to do what ought to be done by forcing the opportunist employer to do what he ought to do anyway."

*C. C. Carpenter, Pres., The MacDougall & Southwick Co., (retail dry goods) Seattle, Wash.* Dec. 31, 1919.

"I am heartily in favor of a minimum wage under control of the State. Such control protects the fair-minded, right-thinking employer."

### The Minimum Wage Does Not Become the Maximum

*A. J. Schroeder, recent president Wisconsin Retail Dry Goods Association, Schroeder Dry Goods Co., Racine, Wis.* Jan. 31, 1920.

"The raising of their salaries" (*i.e.*, employees who had received less than the minimum wage) "entailed a sympathetic

raising of the salaries of a great many other employees so that the proposition of pay would be fair."

*Thomas Roberts, Roberts Bros., (dry goods, shoes, men's furnishings) Portland, Oregon.* January 6, 1920.

"Not only has it" (the minimum wage) "improved the ones on the lower scale, but it has been the means of raising wages all along the line."

*James McCormack, President, McCormack Bros., (retail dry goods) Tacoma, Wash.* Dec. 30, 1919.

"The average wage is fully 25 per cent. more" (than the minimum wage) "brought about, of course, by competition for the efficient help on the part of department stores, energy and ability on the part of the employees."

*Luther C. White, Employment Manager, Clothing Manufacturers' Association of Boston, Mass.* Feb. 1, 1920.

"Our attitude is not altruistic in the matter, for we think we know that skilled labor at a fair wage is the cheapest for the manufacturer who wishes to turn out a properly made product. All the clothing manufacturers do not see this, and in the press of competition are inclined, perhaps, to disregard the quality of product and use 'cheap' (*i.e.*, low-priced) labor to the detriment of trade conditions as a whole. With a minimum fairly set, no manufacturer will do this—he will prefer to pay a wage higher than the minimum and secure competent workwomen, rather than pay a high (?) minimum to inefficient workers."

## Employers Endorse Minimum Wage Laws

*Morris B. Anderson, Pres., Raincoat Makers & Manufacturers' Ass'n., Boston, Mass.* Feb. 2, 1920.

"Permit me to express my hearty approval of this legislation" (minimum wage for women).

*F. E. Day, Shull-Day Co., (manufacturers of trousers and overalls) Tacoma, Wash.* Jan. 19, 1920.

"Before the minimum wage law was enforced in this state and while it was yet being discussed, I was of the opinion that it would be very hurtful to us, but after observing its good, I entirely changed my viewpoint."

*Luther C. White, Employment Manager, Clothing Manufacturers' Association, of Boston, Mass.* Feb. 1, 1920.

"We believe in it—and think that now, while the ordinary wage for labor is far above any minimum which would be fixed by any Commission, is a good time to get a fairly high minimum established. As a result, the (wage) Board on which I served in a readjustment of the minimum, fixed $15 per week for the trained worker. This figure was based, primarily, on the present cost of living, and is, of course, subject to revision later if that cost should decrease materially."

*E. L. Thompson, Treas., Portland Woolen Mills, Portland, Ore.* Dec. 3, 1919.

"For the past several years, Oregon has been operating under the minimum wage law, and greatly to the surprise of some of our employers, it has not brought 'harm to their business,' as they had feared. We feel that this law has been of actual lasting benefit to our industry in this state, and thoroughly believe in its provisions."

*W. A. Hawkins, Director, Jordan Marsh Co., (retail dry goods) Boston, Mass.* Jan. 31, 1920.

"I beg to state that I do endorse a minimum wage law for women provided that law be so framed, and so constantly followed up by efficient inspectors and so backed up by sufficient penalty, that all, both large and small employers, shall be forced to obey it."

*Julius Garfinkle, Julius Garfinkle & Co., (retail dry goods) Washington, D. C.* Feb. 18, 1920.

"I am very seriously of the opinion that we shall see more and more the benefit of the minimum wage as it goes on, as it will mean the survival of the fittest in the business world of employment."

*A. J. Schroeder, recent president of the Wisconsin Retail Dry Goods Association, Racine, Wis.* Jan. 31, 1920.

"Personally I am in favor of the minimum wage legislation because I think it will better the conditions under which every one works, both employee and employer."

*Alfred E. Adams, Secretary, Retail Dry Goods Merchants' Association of Los Angeles, Calif.* Jan. 31, 1919.

"It would seem to be the general consensus of opinion among the members of this Association that the minimum wage has been of considerable benefit to the employee and has worked no hardship on the merchant up to the present time."

*B. F. Schlesinger, general manager, Emporium, (retail dry goods) San Francisco, Calif.* Jan. 18, 1919.

"We have operated under minimum wage law for women for over a year and find it is not only beneficial for our em-

ployees but also for ourselves. Feel the mercantile community in the East when its operation is better understood will agree with majority of merchants here that it is wise and progressive legislation."

*Geo. S. De Neale, Supt., S. Kann Sons Co., (retail dry goods) Washington, D. C.* October 6, 1920.

"After operating under the minimum wage law for a period of twelve months, we are thoroughly convinced, that if it is rigidly enforced, it is a good thing for both employer and employee."

*C. B. Heinrich, (retail dry goods) Burrton, Kansas.* Feb. 18, 1920.

"The minimum wage law for women employees is all right and I think it has helped the women and us wonderfully."

*C. M. Lessenden, Manager and Owner, C. M. Lessenden & Co., (retail dry goods) Downs, Kansas.* Feb., 1920.

"A few months ago word came to me that an effort was being made to do away with our minimum wage and maximum hour laws for working women. Personally, I think an employer is lacking in his better judgment when he tries to do away with anything as sound as this law.

"It is a splendid thing for Kansas and only marks Kansas again in a pioneer movement for the betterment of society."

*George S. Danforth, Pres., Danforth-Scott, (retail dry goods) Wichita, Kansas.* March 16, 1920.

"We wish to add our indorsement to the minimum wage law for women employed in the state."

*Earl C. Williams, Manager, The Crosby Bros., Co., (retail dry goods) Topeka, Kansas.* Feb. 21, 1920.

"We most heartily approve of this law as it stands at present and would never think of going back to the old way of doing business."

*Frank R. Jelleff, (women's and misses' apparel) Washington, D. C.* October 6, 1920.

"We are very pleased to say that we find the operation of the minimum wage law to be of no detriment whatever to us, and we believe that for the community as a whole it is a forward step. We heartily endorse it."

COMPILED BY
MARY W. DEWSON, RESEARCH SECRETARY



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